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KINDERGARTEN

AND

PRIMARY SCHOOL

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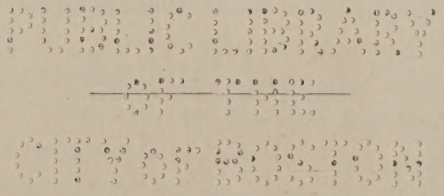
THE BLIND.

AN EARNEST APPEAL

FOR

ITS FOUNDATION AND ENDOWMENT.



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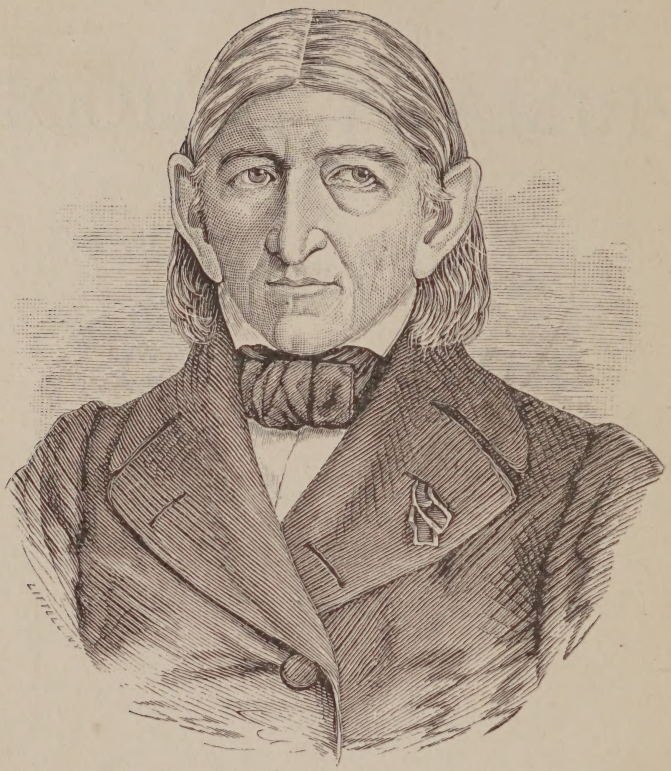

Kommt, lasst uns den Kindern leben!

Friedrich Fröbel.

Allen A. Brown,
Mar 6, 1899.

PREFACE.

Much has already been accomplished for the amelioration of the condition of the blind. The blessings of education have been extended to them. The light of knowledge has at length dawned for them. Sufficient means have of late been procured to quench their proverbial thirst for literature adapted to the sense of touch, and the pangs of an appalling calamity have lost most of their sting. These are the infallible evidences of an enlightened and refined community. They are the imperishable monuments by which our age shall be distinguished and our civilization shall be known to coming generations.

But with all this progress and advancement the system of education for the blind is not yet complete. A vital element is still lacking for its perfection. There is no provision for the instruction and training of very little blind children. The early practice of Dr. Howe of receiving them under the roof of the institution and bringing them up with older youth has been necessarily discontinued by the rapid growth of the school.

It is obvious, however, that these afflicted members of the human family need more attention and cultivation than all others. They are shrouded from the cradle in the ceaseless gloom that has settled down like a night upon them. They are oppressed by poverty and threatened by degradation. They are doomed to an existence of ignorance and misguided indulgence, left to bask in the sun in summer and to hang over the fire in winter, passing through the tenderest period of their life without any care and training, the lack of which stunts and dwarfs them both mentally and physically. The sparks of capacity for active enterprise, which exist in the majority of them, and which might be nurtured into a flame of usefulness,

become gradually extinguished, and many of these unfortunate beings sink into weak-mindedness and go down darkling to the grave! Think of all this, ye friends of suffering humanity, and then say if there be in the wide world a class of children who need more the active sympathy and aid of their fellow-men than do the infant blind!

For the deliverance of these little children and the palliation of their physical disabilities, a special kindergarten, or primary school, will be the best and most effective means. It will dispel the clouds of wretchedness and foster the budding and blooming of dormant faculties and latent capabilities. It will place the first round of the ladder of education on a level with the tiny feet of the very smallest sightless children, so that they may "climb," as Sir Walter Raleigh said, "without fearing to fall." It will raise them from the slough of polluting misery in which they wallow and enable them to step upon the platform of activity and happiness. Without it the whole system of instruction and training of blind persons is imperfect. It lacks a life-giving principle.

Humanity, justice, expediency and imperative duty, all alike demand that immediate and vigorous measures should be taken for the establishment and endowment of such a school as will be not only an auxiliary but a complement to our institution.

For this purpose we earnestly appeal to the public for a permanent fund of $250,000.

Fellow-citizens, will you not aid us to assist the blind to help themselves?

KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL.

[Extract from the Fifty-first Annual Report of the Trustees.]

It was stated in the course of the exercises of the semi-centennial anniversary at Tremont Temple, that the most urgent need in the cause of the education of the blind is the establishment and endowment of a kindergarten or primary school. A careful investigation of the matter will prove, beyond doubt, that the organization of an institution of this kind is not a mere desideratum; it is an imperative necessity.

There is in New England a large number of blind children between the ages of five and nine, who are too young to be received in a mixed school like ours. They live and move in a very unhealthy atmosphere. Their minds are contaminated by low influences, and their growth stinted by their confinement in ill-ventilated and comfortless quarters. They waste away under the rust of neglect, and the want of sufficient food and proper care. They parch and pine within a short distance of the refreshing waters of a benevolence known all over the civilized world.

For such children the kindergarten system, with the genial warmth of kindness radiating from its principles, with its methodically arranged gifts and games, its block building, weaving, sewing and modelling, affords the best and most efficient means

of training. It is calculated to awaken, strengthen and regulate their faculties of imagination, volition and action, which are weakened by their infirmity, depressed by the wretchedness of their surroundings, and benumbed by the frost of their privations. It promises to raise them up from a state of misery, sloth and torpor, to that of comfort, activity and diligence. It will create a new era in the history of the education of the blind, by laying the foundations and increasing the possibilities of a higher standard of attainments than has hitherto been reached.

The necessity for immediate action in this matter is thoroughly discussed and plainly shown in the report of the director, and an appeal is made in behalf of these unfortunate children for the foundation and endowment of such a school as would be the means of their deliverance from their present condition. The call for aid to this end is clear, broad, pathetic and to the point. We heartily commend it to the favorable consideration of a generous public.

JOHN S. DWIGHT,
JOSEPH B. GLOVER,
J. THEODORE HEARD,
HENRY LEE HIGGINSON,
JAMES H. MEANS,
ROBERT TREAT PAINE, JR.,
EDWARD N. PERKINS,
JOHN C. PHILLIPS,
SAMUEL M. QUINCY,
SAMUEL G. SNELLING,
JAMES STURGIS,
GEORGE W. WALES,

Trustees.

ABSOLUTE NEED OF A KINDERGARTEN.

[Extracts from the Fifty-first Annual Report of the Director.]

Eloquent the children's faces —
  Poverty's lean look, which saith,
Save us! save us! woe surrounds us;
Little knowledge sore confounds us;
  Life is but a lingering death.

Give us light amid our darkness;
  Let us know the good from ill;
Hate us not for all our blindness;
Love us, lead us, show us kindness,
  You can make us what you will.

We are willing; we are ready;
  We would learn if you would teach;
We have hearts that yearn towards duty;
We have minds alive to beauty;
  Souls that any heights can reach.

MARY HOWITT.

These lines give a striking picture of the condition of a large number of little blind children who are scattered in all parts of New England, living in total physical darkness and indescribable destitution. They set forth clearly and concisely their wants and capabilities, and present in plain and simple words a pathetic and resistless appeal in their behalf.

Like other human beings, these afflicted children of night are endowed with faculties and capacities susceptible of development, growth and improve-

ment; but, unlike most of them, they are considered as hopelessly disabled by their infirmity, and are thoughtlessly doomed to sloth and inertia. Pale, nerveless, haggard, and evidently reduced in vitality, they are confined to wretched lodgings, and are permitted to lead a distressing existence. All the natural pleasures of childhood are unknown to them. Not a ray of joy enters the dark chamber of their isolation; not a breath of happiness lightens the heavy pressure of the clouds of their calamity. They are usually born in poverty, and often in moral depravity. They are nursed by sorrow, surrounded by vice, accompanied by misfortune, brought up in neglect, and tortured by inexpressible misery. They live in a world of seclusion and suffering, with the woes of which very few of our citizens are acquainted. Hunger, filth, foul air, stifling heat, or severe cold — these and their like are the daily attendants and constant companions of these unfortunate human beings.

But it is beyond doubt that the souls of these children have in them something of that cloud of glory of which the poet sings. No matter how hideous and squalid their lives may be, they have susceptibilities that can be touched by kindness, beauty and goodness. They have hearts which can be reached by love and sympathy. They have the germs of natural aptitudes and mental abilities which can be fostered by care and brought to fruition by training.

Now the salvation and future welfare of these

children of misfortune depend wholly upon their being removed from the poisonous effects of their environment, and placed in neat and healthy quarters, where the means for physical well-being and systematic training are sufficiently provided, and the spirit of good-will and benevolence all pervading and guiding, and where faith in man's capacity for improvement and elevation is firmly adhered to, and parental care and affection freely bestowed. This salutary change should be effected before corrupt tendencies and vicious propensities are hardened and crystallized into permanent habits; and the tender age between five and nine years seems most appropriate for it. Being brought so early in life under favorable influences and a regular course of bodily, mental and moral culture, the children will prove better subjects for reformation than if taken in charge later on. Good principles and aspirations will sink more deeply into their minds while these are still in a plastic state and comparatively free from low impressions and mean encumbrances; and when sound seed is sown before the tares have time to take root, the probability is that the harvest will be more abundant and of a purer and better quality.

For the accomplishment of this noble purpose, the foundation of a primary school for little blind children is imperatively needed. As there is neither room nor conveniences for such an establishment on the premises of this institution, and as it is, moreover, neither advisable nor desirable to

have its tender inmates associated and brought up together with youth between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years, it should be placed elsewhere within the limits of the city. It should have a pleasant and healthy location, and occupy a lot of land comprising five acres at least. It should be organized on sound principles, and conducted on a broad and liberal policy. There should be nothing about either its title or arrangements which would in any way compromise its educational character. Its existence should be secured by an endowment fund of about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and its doors should be freely opened not only to such indigent blind children as are above described, but to all others who are deprived of the visual sense and may be desirous of entering the school. They should be retained until the age of twelve, and taught and trained objectively according to the simple and rational methods developed in Froebel's kindergarten.

This system is admirably suited for the instruction of little blind children, containing, as it does, within itself, that principle of organic life manifested in gradual development, and the power of counteracting the undesirable effects produced by the loss of sight and by weakening and degrading influences. It turns innocent play to useful account, and cultivates happiness on the fertile soil of industry. By the felicitous combination of "doing with knowing," the intellectual activity is unconsciously promoted while the physical strength

is steadily increased. In the simple and delicate crafts of folding, weaving, block-building, sewing, embroidering upon cardboard, modelling in clay, and the like, a grand purpose is subserved, that of unfolding the various powers of the body and mind just at the time when they are particularly capable of harmonious growth, eager for improvement and most pliable in every respect.

Of the numerous beneficent results obtained from the above-named occupations and from similar interesting and attractive exercises, the following are the most noticeable: Good physical development; muscular strength and elasticity; habits of attention and order; clearness and precision in thinking; freedom and grace of movement; quickness of invention and fertility of imagination; a keen sense of symmetry and harmony, together with love of construction and appreciation of utility; great mechanical skill in the use of the hands, and initiation into the conventionalities of polite society, in their demeanor toward each other, and in matters of eating, drinking and personal cleanliness.

The average intelligence of pupils taught in the kindergarten is decidedly superior to that of children who enter the primary schools without such training. The former are more or less accustomed to exert themselves in the search for information, and prepared to derive greater benefit from instruction and mental discipline than the latter. They generally observe accurately, seize ideas rapidly

and definitely, illustrate readily, work independently and express their thoughts with correctness and fluency. To persons bereft of sight, Froebel's system promises even higher results than these. It affords them unequalled facilities for gaining an adequate conception of forms of various kinds, and rare opportunities for the practice and refinement of their remaining senses, especially of that of touch, which is their chief reliance for the acquisition of all concrete knowledge, and consequently the most important factor of their education. Above all, the drill obtained through its exercises so early in life and under such genial influences, will prove a valuable auxiliary for future achievements and the most effective agent for raising the standard of attainments in this school. For a great part of the time which is now necessarily spent in mere primary routine work and elementary training, can then be devoted to the pursuit of advanced studies both in the literary and musical departments, and to a thorough preparation for a professional or other calling. Thus there will be a positive and most significant gain at both ends, which will in some measure pave the way for the solution of the great problem of the higher education for the blind and their thorough equipment for the struggle of existence.

It is obvious from these facts and from a careful consideration of the matter, that a well-fitted and sufficiently provided kindergarten will be to little sightless children what the light of the sun and

the dew of heaven are to tender plants, — a source of life and growth and strength, a flame dispelling the clouds of darkness, a fountain of happiness and strength, aiding them to outsoar the shadows of their night. It will be a psalm of their deliverance from the clutches of misery, a hymn to the dawn of an era of freedom and independence, a benediction to the benevolence of our age.

In behalf of these afflicted children, who from the midst of the wretchedness and neglect in which they are plunged, stretch their helpless hands towards the shore and call for a life-boat, we make an earnest appeal to the generous and wealthy members of our community, and hope that it will touch a responsive chord in their hearts. When they determine to pronounce the grand verdict and say, "let there be a permanent source of light and happiness for little blind children," there will be no intellectual and moral darkness for them any longer.

Cicero says, that men resemble the gods in nothing so much as in doing good to their fellow creatures. "*Homines ad deos nulla se propius accedunt, quam salutem hominibus dando.*" There may possibly be some, however, who are disposed to bestow their gifts upon works of an artistic nature, upon the cause of higher or professional education, upon the furtherance of culture and refinement, but not inclined to aid an enterprise which is calculated to seek its beneficiaries in the humblest social ranks and lighten one of the

greatest human calamities of half its weight. If there be such among our generous citizens, let me remind them of the words of Richter: "Very beautiful is the eagle when he floats with outstretched wings aloft in the clear blue; but sublime when he plunges down through the tempests to his eyrie on the cliff, where his unfledged young ones dwell and are starving."

M. ANAGNOS.

A Christmas Present.

The little girls of the kindergarten department of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, at South Boston, sent to the director, Mr. Anagnos, a Christmas box of beautiful little articles made after the Froebelian system of gifts. The present was accompanied by a few lines neatly written by the little girls themselves, to which the following reply was made: —

South Boston, December 25, 1882.

Dearly Beloved Children: — I have often thought that the 21st day of April, 1782, brought to childhood with the birth of Froebel a new era of activity and happiness, whose influence went forth to teach mankind a larger wisdom and a deeper love than it ever knew before. The gifts which you have been so kind as to prepare for me with your little fingers are in their simplicity and prettiness a striking confirmation of my thought, and I thank you heartily for them. I assure you that, if spirits hold jubilees, that of Froebel is in perfect glee whenever children like you illustrate by the work of their hands their own ability to think and do, and his love for humanity.

Your admirable success in Froebel's philosophical system of physical, mental and moral training shows that a separate kindergarten for children much younger than yourselves is absolutely needed. An earnest appeal has already been made to the public for the foundation and endowment of such an institution.

May we not hope that the generous community which has so recently furnished you with a sufficient supply of embossed books will provide this inestimable boon for your little sisters and brothers in misfortune?

The liberality of the past is a sufficient guarantee of success in the future.

Believe me, dearest children, with renewed thanks for your thoughtful remembrance,

Your affectionate friend, M. ANAGNOS.

To the little girls of the fourth and fifth classes.

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I GIVE and bequeath to the "Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind," in Boston, and their successors forever, the sum of $, to be paid by my executors out of my real and personal estate, when the same shall be payable, to the treasurer of the institution, for the time-being, in trust, to be applied by the trustees thereof and under their direction to the endowment fund of a kindergarten and primary school for the blind.

Subscriptions and contributions will be thankfully received by

EDWARD JACKSON, Treasurer.

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